This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS HELSINKI 000287

SIPDIS

FOR NEA/ELA, EUR/ERA, AND EUR/NB

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PREL MOPS SY LE FI
SUBJECT: FINLAND ON SYRIA'S PRESENCE IN LEBANON

REF: STATE 39018

¶1. (U) In a March 6 interview with local television, Finnish
Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja said that withdrawal of
Syrian troops to the Biqa' is insufficient. Tuomioja
stressed that Syrian troops must move to the Syrian side of
the border, and added the following:

"It is not a question of a day or two, but it should start
without delay. If Hizballah sticks to peaceful protests, it
should not endanger this process. Hizballah is a political
party, which is represented in the Lebanese Parliament. But
it represents a minority position."

¶2. (U) In a March 7 conversation with Finnish MFA Under
Secretary for Political Affairs Markus Lyra, the Ambassador

SIPDIS
expressed appreciation for the FM's statement on the need for
Syrian withdrawal, and urged the GoF to continue such
statements. The Ambassador stressed, however, that
withdrawal must begin immediately, and be finished by the
time of the Lebanese Parliamentary elections. Withdrawal
must also include Syrian intelligence personnel, to rid
Lebanon of their pernicious influence. The Ambassador noted
that this is not a complex issue, nor one with any ambiguity:
democracy is "busting out all over" the Middle East, and the
Syrians must comply with UNSC Resolution 1559, period. Under
Secretary Lyra said the Finns agree, and promised us he would

SIPDIS
convey this demarche to President Halonen (who, under the
Finnish constitution, shares authority with the government
for Finland's foreign policy) and to the Foreign Minister.

¶3. (U) The Ambassador also noted that the government of
Lebanon must accept international observers to monitor the
election process, and asked whether the Finns plan to
contribute any observers. Lyra said the Finns will offer at
least a small number of observers.
MACK